

NEW JERSEY'S SHAD

Some of the Characteristics of a Very Odd Fish Found in Eastern Waters.

How North-western Indians Catch Trout and Salmon—Necessity of Fish Preservation—Local Items of Interest to Fishermen.

Special to the Indianapolis Journal.

CAMP MAY, N. J., May 19.—The shad has been seen and heard in lower Delaware bay this spring. It hasn't been seen in large quantities, of course, for the appearance of this odd fish in these waters is a rare occurrence. But a few of the shad have been seen by the fishermen since the season began. They come from the South and only when the wind has died down and the water is quiet. They swim in schools, emitting musical notes as they swim along. The sounds they make are soft and something like those of an Aeolian harp. It is hard to express or rather imitate on paper the melody they sing. It runs something like this:

Woe, ho, he, hi, do, di, wee, ho, do, di, dum. This sound cannot be made with any effect except when the shad is in schools. The singing of a single shad is too feeble to be heard above the ripple of the water. This year has been the first for probably a decade that the shad has favored the fishermen of Delaware bay. Captain Arnold, one of the oldest and most truthful of south Jersey fishermen, said the other day that he had heard the singing shad a number of times in his recent career. They are, of course, so far north as this. Even when they do come, only old fishermen are apt to hear and distinguish them. We know about them, and are more or less on the lookout for their occasional arrival. They really belong to the coast of Bolivia and Chili. There they are quite common. All sorts of fairy tales are narrated about them by South American fishermen. The shad is said to be bred in the Japanese waters. The fishermen of Japan are delighted when they strike a school of singing shad. They follow them up to the beach, and then they catch the fish as they are inspired. They throw them food and never catch or eat them.

The singing shad is different from the common shad and roe shad. It is larger and there is a slight difference in the formation of the mouth. Only an expert fisherman can tell when he has caught one of the funny creatures. Old fishermen regard it as a prize and do not send them to market, unless they are paid a very high price for them. It is estimated that they travel in schools of about twenty. They are very numerous in places at first, but soon grow monotonous, owing to the fact that it is a constant repetition of the same few sounds. Whether many of these peculiar shads are the same as the shad now on New York and Michigan with the plain, every-day, Hudson-river shad, is not known. They lose their identity when they get in with other fish, and it is doubtful if they ever sing alone.

A Novel Method of Fishing.

Forest and Stream.

The two Indians were going to show us their method of catching trout and salmon. The stream runs between steep mountains, is very rocky and the current swift. The water is cold, and clear as crystal. It was alive with small trout and the big holes were well filled with salmon or salmon-trout, ranging from five to twelve pounds. How I did ache for my gun, which I had foolishly left down in the valley. These fish, from the smallest to the largest, would take the fly or any kind of bait readily.

Sister proved this by losing fly hooks to two big fellows, but he captured a nice lot of the smaller ones, ranging from half a pound down. He stopped when he had enough, but I verily believe I could have easily taken in a day by the Indians were fishing for themselves, and of course we could not prevent them from using their regular method of catching trout and salmon. While not sportsmanlike, it was decidedly interesting.

They first select a suitable hole with fish enough to be an object. In this case it was about 200 yards long, thirty feet wide, and varying in depth to ten feet. At the bottom, lastly swimming and jumping, were a number of fish. From a sack Johnny produced two light silk nets, which were stretched across the stream about forty yards apart. Then he produced the tip of a pole, which was bound to a strong willow pole. These tips, when thrust into a fish, come off the pole, but are held by buckskin strips. Now we are ready for business. Hooks are thrown into the water and the started fish dart about, and in a moment the floats of a net are jerked violently under the water. The fish writhes and twists, tangles himself up hopelessly, and is soon taken out by his captors. Sometimes a heavy fish would break the net and escape, but not often. After a number had been caught this way, the fishermen cleared it out at once, and skinned. Then the spear came into play, several being taken. On receiving the barbs they would struggle violently, and being hauled out by main strength and awkwardness, would make a good fight.

Most of the big fish had not taken refuge under large rocks in the deepest part, and were clear out of sight. Then the tip of the net was stripped off, and with small net eighteen inches in diameter, in the mouth of which was bent a willow pole, making it resemble the ordinary landing net, he slipped quietly into the stream, and after a few minutes he came up with a large rock. I held my breath in amazement, and after he had been underneath nearly a minute I concluded he had drowned. But no; away down a dark mass came along, and in a quick moment to surface. With a snort his head popped up, while in the net under his arm a twelve-pound fish was struggling. He crawled out shivering, and after a sun bath was ready for another plunge. Along the bank for thirty feet was a shoveler rock under which several fish had taken refuge. Propelling himself along from fashion, the Indian cleared it out at once, catching one fish and driving out the rest.

Thus they kept at work, until, after about three hours' work, not a fish was left in the hole that would weigh as much as a pound. They caught about 400 pounds of fresh fish on this trip. During the height of the fishing season the Indians from the reservation visit this stream by trios, for miles entirely clear the river of fish. They are also quite expert with hook and line, using venison for bait. Mr. Steiger presented one of them with a number of handsome fly hooks. He looked at them with a comical air, then took out his knife and deliberately trimmed the fly, saying that he "didn't care for any of those new flies; venison was good enough for him for bait."

Preservation of Fish.

Special to the Indianapolis Journal.

Careful observers have estimated that a mature female black bass will deposit about 25,000 eggs and, under natural conditions, hatch about 10 per cent, or 2,500 of them. If but 10 per cent of these escape the enemies, and survive the ill of little fishes, we have an increase of 250 mature fish from the nesting of a single pair. As they will begin breeding at an early age it is easily seen that if none are taken or killed illegally it is not a question of a few years until the number of bass in suitable waters will be limited only by the supply of fish food therein. It will also be seen that if the laws are ample and so obeyed or enforced as to afford protection to the question of restocking will soon take care of itself. The present laws are good so far as they go, but need some amendments to make them effective. In the first place, the penalties should be made more severe; then we need a law prescribing a close season during which to have in possession, in the vicinity of public waters, the means for taking fish should be prima facie evidence of guilt.

The section forbidding the use of nets should be amended to provide for their confiscation and destruction if their illegal use is proved, and having them in possession under certain circumstances should be prima facie evidence of such use and their possessor's guilt.

The section providing for the erection of fish-houses also should be amended to provide for the taking of fish at any time within a certain distance, say 500 feet, below any dam. An increased appropriation for paying wardens and sustaining a State hatchery may be considered later.

To secure the necessary legislation and its observance is made difficult by the public indifference to a matter of great economic importance and by the immunity from punishment so long enjoyed by the law-breakers. The law should be accompanied only through the medium of an enlightened public sentiment which will naturally follow a better understanding of the subject. The present, the great advantage of the people, should lead in the work and be aided by active protective societies in every community which shall urge the observance of the laws and the great advantage of the people. The guilty ones are known, or can be easily located, and if the officers refuse to prosecute them the public must do it. Individual efforts in this direction would often meet with personal personal attacks, hence the necessity of organized societies in whose name the complaints can be filed.

Here, as elsewhere, but little effective work will be done towards protecting the fish and game until bare fields and lifeless streams remain the people of nature's rich gifts gone forever, or to be restored only by earnest efforts and heavy expense. We are entitled to the fish that unhappy day and the few who have labored long with voice and pen to arouse the people will have as a sign full of promise the Journal's recent article on the subject.

While we may here at home deplore the public indifference and indifference, it is to be hoped that the distinguished committee of the Fly-fisherman's Club will not cease its abroad making their proposed application to the United States Commission for several millions of black bass fry. That valuable fish cannot be artificially propagated, so the commission does not have the young in large numbers.

INDIANAPOLIS, May 19. E. ROBINSON. [A member of the Fly-fisherman's Club says that it is a well-known fact that the eggs and mill cannot be stripped from black bass like it is from salmon and trout, and therefore they cannot be hatched in an artificial manner. However, there are other ways of propagating them. Artificial ponds are constructed with a spawning bed of existing nature in developing fish spawn. Paired bass are put into these ponds, and after they are through spawning and the young are hatched the old ones are taken out, thereby saving the eggs and the capacity of their parents. In this way millions of young bass are annually secured for distribution. Fred Mather, in charge of the hatchery at the State Fish Commission, is now experimenting with hatching bass eggs in another way, which gives evidence of success.]

Local Fishing Matters.

The bass are commencing to spawn and should be left severely alone for at least thirty days. Everyone caught now, whether male or female, destroys the chance of life for thousands of fish that would be worth hundreds of dollars as an article of food in a few years.

There is a little pond of water close to the Vincennes railroad track, and near the Beeler homestead, that used to be full of red-eyes and croppies. It was long ago thought to have been fished out, but last week a couple of boys from the city caught nearly two hundred croppies out of it in a few hours.

Several cases of illegal seining are reported as having been taken place during the past week. A large party of men with a one hundred-foot seine in the vicinity of Hogg's island, below the city, on Sunday, while another party had improved a thirty-foot seine of minnow nets, and was using it in Fall creek, near Millersville. Here is an opportunity for the grand jury.

The Terre Haute Gazette gives extremely funny over the announcement of the anglers' tournament, to be held at Wide-out, on the canal, on Thursday, will be a pleasing and interesting event. All the anglers have been arranged, and these will be designated on Wednesday evening at a special meeting of the Fly-fisherman's Club. They will be designated by members of the club who do not wish to enter the contest. The Waterworks company, besides tendering the use of their large flat-bottomed boats, have placed their steam launch at the disposal of the club, and this will leave the St. Clair-street bridge at 9 o'clock on the morning of the tournament. The prizes are divided in the two classes were displayed in Albert Gall's show-window last week, and although they are neither numerous nor costly, they will serve the purpose of creating a little rivalry among the casters.

Of Interest to Shooters.

A free-for-all shooting match at inanimate targets will be held on Monday at the grounds near the Fairgrounds. The match will be a prize match, and will be numerous on the afternoon of Decoration day at August Leavitt's new grounds. Standard inanimate targets, English sparrows and live pigeons will be used.

At the forty-third shooting match of the North-side Gun club last Monday, Horace Comstock won the club badge. He was aided by Dr. S. H. Moore, who broke twelve singles and four doubles to Mr. Comstock's fourteen singles and three doubles. In the shoot-off, which was between Comstock and Dr. Moore, Comstock won. Standard targets were used—fifty-five singles and five doubles.

A villat (symplicaria semipalmata) was shot, last week, on a sand-bar in the river, south of the city. It is not often found in the interior of the country, as it belongs to the numerous family of shore-birds to be seen along the Atlantic coast. Its body and tail is usually about fifteen inches long, with a wingspread of eight inches. The upper parts are of a dark, ashy color, while the under parts are white and under parts are white. It is regarded as a curiosity by those who saw it.

English sparrows are rapidly taking the place of all other birds at shooting-matches in this city. The reason for this is that pigeons are becoming very scarce and expensive, seldom costing the shooter less than 25 cents a bird. Sparrows are more numerous and are really better targets than the larger birds, because they require more skill to drop them before they are out of range. It is almost impossible for trap-shooters to make a high score with them on account of their flight. Another thing that is bringing them into favor is the fact that most people consider them a nuisance in cities, and therefore the conscience of the sportsman is not so liable to be troubled about their slaughter.

The country is being flooded with cheap guns. This is mainly due to the sharp competition among the gun-makers and to the invention of new processes for turning them out. Breach-loading guns that cost \$100 a few years ago can now be bought for half that amount, and are considered for much less. An American gun at any time, the Indian cleared it out at once, catching one fish and driving out the rest.

Thus they kept at work, until, after about three hours' work, not a fish was left in the hole that would weigh as much as a pound. They caught about 400 pounds of fresh fish on this trip. During the height of the fishing season the Indians from the reservation visit this stream by trios, for miles entirely clear the river of fish. They are also quite expert with hook and line, using venison for bait. Mr. Steiger presented one of them with a number of handsome fly hooks. He looked at them with a comical air, then took out his knife and deliberately trimmed the fly, saying that he "didn't care for any of those new flies; venison was good enough for him for bait."

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